



Testimony of  
**Melodie Peters, President**  
AFT Connecticut

Public Health Committee  
March 16, 2015

***HB 6796 An Act Concerning Recommendations of the School Nurse Advisory Council***

Good afternoon Senator Gerratana, Representative Ritter and members of the Public Health Committee. My name is Melodie Peters and I am the President of AFT Connecticut, a diverse union of nearly 30,000 members, including more than 7,000 caregivers who work in all kinds of healthcare settings across the state, including hospitals; patient homes; and public schools. It is on behalf of our school nurses that I submit this testimony today in support of HB 6796 An Act Concerning Recommendations of the School Nurse Advisory Council.

School nursing is a specialized practice of professional nursing that advances the well-being, academic success, and life-long achievement of students. To that end, school nurses facilitate positive student responses to normal development; promote health and safety; intervene with actual and potential health problems; provide case management services; and actively collaborate with others to build student and family capacity for adaptation, self-management, self-advocacy, and learning.

The critical role school nurses play has been underappreciated for some time. We rely heavily on them, but too often they have been ignored in public health and public education policy discussions. As a result, they have not been given the resources they need to succeed. That is why AFT Connecticut advocated for the creation of the School Nurse Advisory Council. We would like to thank members of the General Assembly and in particular the members of the Public Health Committee, for understanding these concerns and passing legislation two years to enact the School Nurse Advisory Council. We fully endorse their proposals, especially their recommendations to improve school nurse staffing levels.

The current school nurse statute requires districts to employ only one Registered Nurse. Though many have more than that, few have at least one in every school. Further, in many districts, a single nurse can be assigned to several schools. This framework is grossly outdated and frankly, dangerous. Student populations are, without doubt, more complex and more acute today than there were thirty years ago with a number of children presenting with a myriad of physical and emotional health issues. School nurses must manage these health needs on a daily basis through assessment, planning, intervention and evaluation. This is an impossible task if nurses are responsible for an unreasonable and unmanageable number of students.

This bill is especially important because it requires school nurses meet qualification requirements specified in regulations adopted by the State Board of Education. We urge you to act favorably on HB 6796 in order to give school nurses the resources they need to succeed for our students. Thank you.